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SUBJECT: DAILY SUMMARY OF JAPANESE PRESS 04/23/09

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ARTICLES:

- (1) G-7 meeting to be held April 24, with wide gulf remaining among Japan, U.S., Europe

MAINICHI (Page 6) (Full)
April 23, 2009

The Group of Seven (G-7) finance ministers and central bank governors will meet in Washington on April 24, local time. Participants will discuss measures to revitalize the global economy, as well as to place new restrictions on financial operations, based

on an agreement reached at the second G-20 financial summit held on April 2. Regarding the details, however, there are still wide differences among Japan, the U.S., and Europe. Under the current situation, it seems difficult to come up with specific measures. Kaoru Yosano, economic and fiscal policy minister and finance minister and also finance minister, and Bank of Japan Government Masaaki Shirakawa will attend the meeting from Japan. They will outline the government's additional economic stimulus package worth 15.4 trillion yen.

Visiting European Central Bank (ECB) President Jean-Claude Trichet said on April 18: "It is essential to swiftly implement what we agreed on." He emphasized that implementing the measures agreed on in the Group of 20 (G-20) financial summit meeting was the current top-priority task.

At the G-20 meeting, participants confirmed a policy of disbursing funds totaling 5 trillion dollars, or 500 trillion yen, by the end of 2010. They also discussed restrictions on hedge funds and ranking firms. British Prime Minister Gordon Prime Minister said: "We agreed on coordination at an unprecedented scale." Since the G-7 meeting will take place only one month after the financial summit, the meeting might end up just being "a ceremony," an international monetary source said, or a forum where the major countries just confirm the need to implement the agreed measures.

The U.S. government also will host a meeting of G-20 finance ministers and central bank governors after hosting the G-7 meeting on the 24th. It is quite unprecedented for a G-7 meeting and a G-20 meeting to be held on the same day. Industrialized countries'

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economies have been reeling, while such emerging countries as China and India have been increasing their international presence. Critics might begin to point out the G-7 framework's limits. In the latest financial summit, a decision was made to increase loans to be offered by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to developing countries. In the coming meeting, participants are expected to discuss measures to strengthen the IMF's functions.

(2) Interview with Shunpei Takemori, professor at Keio University, on G-7 meeting: Specific discussion likely to be postponed

MAINICHI (Page 6) (Full)
April 23, 2009

-- Only less than one month has passed since the financial summit was held. Do you think a new agreement will be reached?

In the financial summit, participants adopted everything that the G-20 can agree on at the present, including a measure to strengthen the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) functions, with an eye on support for emerging economies. The current top priority task is to return the global economy to normalcy. Specific discussions on financial regulations that could obstruct our effort to that end and other matters will have to be postponed.

-- The G-7 is losing its influence, isn't it?

When we encounter a serious crisis, it is important to send a strong message to the world. In this sense, a message from the G-20, which includes China and Russia, is apparently more effective than one from the G-7. Even so, the role played by the G-7 as a practical organ is still significant.

-- Despite the measures worked out by countries, prospects for economic recovery are still nowhere in sight.

The economy is unlikely to hit bottom for a while. If the economy remains sluggish even after the ongoing financial crisis is overcome, each nation's expanded fiscal deficit due to economic stimulus measures will unavoidably become a destabilizing factor. Japan should explore ways to emerge from the recession on its own by promoting trade in the Asian region as a global growth center.

(3) Ruling camp trying to shake up opposition with 'Constitution'

The ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and the LDP's coalition partner, New Komeito, are in a hurry to open a session of the House of Representatives Commission on the Constitution (kenpo shinsakai), which is a prior condition for amending the Constitution. The commission has long been moribund. The ruling parties intend to set regulations for the panel and pick members for it. The ruling camp, however, does not have concrete prospects for constitutional amendments, since the House of Councillors is controlled by the opposition bloc. The ruling camp's move, therefore, appears to be aimed at bringing discord in the opposition over views of the Constitution to light, ahead of the upcoming Lower House election.

Following the establishment of the National Referendum Law in May 2007, a commission was set up in each of the two Diet chambers. Due

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to the forced vote on the referendum law by the ruling camp, however, the two commissions have yet to function because discussions have not been held on committee rules and regulations (shinsakai kitei) that would determine the number of committee members, as well as the rules of procedure. Given that, the secretaries general and Diet affairs committee chairmen of the LDP and New Komeito yesterday confirmed a policy of opening a session of the lower chamber's commission during the ongoing Diet session.

The ruling coalition has crafted a set of rules and regulations for the Lower House Commission on the Constitution that includes: 1) the number of members should be set at 50; 2) the panel should carry out activities while the Diet is in session or not; and 3) a vote should be passed by a majority of the panel members attending the session. LDP Lower House Steering Committee Chairman Kenji Kosaka yesterday conveyed to the opposition side his party's intention to explain the ruling camp-drafted rules and regulations in a steering committee session on April 23 and take a vote in the next session. The main opposition Democratic Party (DPJ), however, is showing no signs of accepting the ruling coalition's plan.

However, even if the commission holds meetings during the current Diet session, it will not be able to examine an amendment bill because no bill will be submitted to the Diet until Oct. 5 based on the provision that has frozen the National Referendum Law. In addition, the opposition-controlled Upper House is reluctant to hold a panel session. A constitutional amendment requires more than two-thirds approval of both houses of the Diet. Therefore, there will be no merit for the ruling coalition to take a forced vote in the Lower House.

The aim of the ruling coalition in rushing to open the Lower House Commission on the Constitution is to shake up the DPJ, in which there are a group calling for constitutional reform and another group calling for protecting the Constitution. The ruling camp also foresees the situation that the largest opposition party has to give consideration to its cooperation with the Japanese Communist Party and the Social Democratic Party, which have opposed the opening of a commission session. The DPJ's Upper House Steering Committee Chairman Takeo Nishioka, who is favor of opening a session, revealed his agony to reporters yesterday, saying: "The prevailing view in the DPJ is that the public seems uninterested in that (constitutional reform)."

(4) View persists in DPJ of SDF nature as fundamentally bad

"The blueprint of U.S. bases in Okinawa must be completely recreated from scratch."

This statement made by Democratic Party of Japan Vice President Seiji Maehara, a skillful security-policy controversialist, on the Japan-U.S. alliance has created a stir in the United States.

Maehara delivered a speech in Washington D.C. on April 16 in which he posed fundamental questions about the realignment of U.S. forces in Japan. In reaction, a member of the audience asked, "Are you suggesting a review of the relocation of the U.S. Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station?" Maehara replied without presenting any concrete plan: "Can things that have not been accomplished over the

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last 13 years be realized now? Once we take the helm of government, this will become possible. We will consider ways to return the base [to Japan] at the earliest possible date."

Maehara, who has launched a nonpartisan group with former Defense Agency Director-General Gen Nakatani of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and others, is said to be close in thinking to LDP defense policy specialists. Hearing Maehara's remarks, an American scholar knowledgeable about Japan wondered, "Isn't Maehara supposed to be a pragmatic politician?"

Former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of the LDP also delivered a speech in Washington D.C. the following day, on April 17. Afterward, he was asked about Japan-U.S. relations in the event that the DPJ took power. He cracked up the audience with this comment: "If Mr. Maehara becomes the prime minister, his administration would not be much different from the LDP's." Abe added: "Mr. Maehara has said that he would abandon the plan to move U.S. Marines to Guam. The DPJ's foreign policy is impossible to predict."

In many cases, the DPJ, which includes lawmakers ranging from conservative to former socialist party members, reaches agreement on its security policies by taking positions opposing government plans.

The party has been engaged in talks with the ruling coalition on revising the government-sponsored antipiracy bill, but there are no prospects for reaching an accord.

The House of Representatives Security Committee met on April 9. Between deliberations, the LDP's Nakatani asked DPJ Deputy Secretary General Akihisa Nagashima about his prospects for the DPJ's revision plan. Last November, Nakatani and Nagashima met Prime Minister Aso and urged him to speed up the antipiracy measures. Nagashima replied to Nakatani [on April 9]: "We will be able to come up with a pragmatic plan."

But what was actually produced by the DPJ was a disappointment to the ruling coalition. The DPJ's plan would establish an antipiracy headquarters under the prime minister and require the government to obtain prior Diet approval to send the SDF on overseas missions.

A senior DPJ lawmaker explained: "There is a view in our party that regards the nature of the SDF as fundamentally bad, so reaching a unified view on the active use of the SDF is difficult."

"Active participation in UN peacekeeping operations" was one of the DPJ's pledges in the 2007 Upper House election. But the issue of who should play the central role remains unclear. Establishing a special standby force distinct from the SDF to take part in UN peacekeeping missions is Ozawa's stock argument from the standpoint that the use of force is allowed under the UN flag. Ozawa's argument not to dispatch the SDF is in line with the opinion of socialist party members who are cautious about dispatching the SDF on overseas missions.

Ozawa also criticized the Obama administration's plan to send more troops to Afghanistan as part of its war on terrorism, aligning himself with the former socialist party members.

Nagashima, who is concerned about the party's diplomatic and security policies after taking power, noted: "Once we take the reins

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of government, there will be no other option but to opt for pragmatic policy. We will have to deal with the United States and

make use of the SDF. The now-defunct Japan Socialist Party initially regarded the SDF as unconstitutional, but the party later declared that it was constitutional. That led to the party's decline. The fate of our party depends on whether or not our shift can stop at 30 degrees instead of 180 degrees."

The DPJ's responses to major security laws and agreements

Representative Year enacted Laws/agreements Response

Naoto Kan 2003 Three contingency-related laws Supported after revision talks with ruling coalition

Iraq Special Measures Law Opposed

Revised Antiterrorism Special Measures Law Opposed

Katsuya Okada 2004 Law Banning Specific Ships from Entering Japanese Ports Supported after revision talks with ruling coalition

Seven contingency-related laws Supported after revision talks with ruling coalition

Seiji Maehara 2005 Revised Antiterrorism Special Measures Law Opposed

Ichiro Ozawa 2006 North Korea Human Rights Law Supported after revision talks with ruling coalition

Law to Upgrade Defense Agency to Ministry Status Supported original plan

2007 Law to Facilitate Realignment of U.S. Forces in Japan Opposed

Revised Iraq Special Measures Law Opposed

2008 Special Agreement on Japan's Host-Nation Support for Costs of Stationing U.S. Forces in Japan Opposed

New Antiterrorism Special Measures Law, Revised New Antiterrorism Special Measures Law Opposed

2009 Guam International Agreement Opposed

Antipiracy Bill --

(5) Editorial: Early enactment of antipiracy bill requires revisions

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)
April 22, 2009

The government-presented antipiracy bill is designed to give legal grounds for the Self-Defense Forces (SDF) to join operations to protect vessels cruising in waters off Somalia from pirates. If the major opposition Democratic Party of Japan sorts out its demands and comes down to seeking Diet approval of SDF activities, that would naturally determine the response of the ruling bloc, which wants to see an early enactment of the legislation.

Many major powers have been engaged in antipiracy activities in waters off Somalia as part of international cooperation. But primarily, the purpose is to protect the lives and property of the people. For this reason, the Japanese government, too, invoked on March 13 the maritime policing provision in the SDF Law's Article 82 and dispatched two [Maritime Self-Defense Force] vessels.

The invocation of the maritime policing provision that is based only on emergency situations in areas surrounding Japan was a desperate measure.

The government adopted the antipiracy bill at a cabinet meeting on the same day and presented it to the Diet. If there were no political guarantee for the enactment of the antipiracy legislation,

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the Defense Ministry did not want to dispatch the vessels.

That was because maritime policing activities are under heavy restrictions, including strict rules on the use of weapons, and also because the ministry judged that the protraction of the mission would put a strain on the SDF personnel in waters off Somalia. In view of effective activities there and the safety of the SDF personnel, an early enactment of the legislation is indispensable.

Depending on how the DPJ reacts, [the ruling camp] may have to use a two-third House of Representatives override vote to pass the bill 60 days after it is sent to the House of Councillors. This process is time consuming. Diet approval of SDF activities might become a point at issue in talks between the ruling and opposition parties. Defense

Minister Yasukazu Hamada is already exhibiting a flexible stance about that point. If the two camps can reach an agreement on that direction, prospects would emerge for an early enactment of the legislation.

There are at least two points that must be considered regarding the Diet's role in connection with SDF activities. One is requesting the flexible operation of the SDF in time of an emergency, and the other is the control of military activities by representatives of the people. Under existing legislation, [the Diet's role] differs depending on the type of activities.

For instance, mobilizing the SDF for maintaining peace and public order in Japan takes only ex post facto approval, mobilizing troops for defense operations necessitates prior approval, UN peacekeeping operations (PKO) requires also prior approval, and activities under the Law on Situations in Areas Surrounding Japan simply needs ex post facto approval. Prior or ex post facto, Diet approval is required in any case.

Of those instances mentioned above, antipiracy activities are close to PKO operations. It took the government five months to dispatch the SDF since the piracy issue was first discussed at the Diet. But envisioning an emergency situation, the ruling and opposition blocs must discuss options, including whether or not to accept ex post facto approval.

The government-presented bill requires only "reports" to the Diet instead of approval by the Diet. This can be interpreted as a margin that factors in some revisions. We would like to see concrete preparations for comprehensive legislation, instead of a time-limited law, on the SDF's international cooperation activities based on discussions on the antipiracy bill.

(6) Poll on Aso cabinet, political parties

ASAHI (Page 3) (Full)
April 21, 2009

Questions & Answers

(Figures shown in percentage, rounded off. Bracketed figures denote proportions to all respondents. Figures in parentheses denote the results of the last survey conducted March 28-29.)

Q: Do you support the Aso cabinet?

Yes 26 (22)

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No 57 (64)

Q: Why? (One reason only. Left column for those marking "yes" on previous question, and right for those marking "no.")

The prime minister is Mr. Aso 19[5] 9[5]
It's an LDP-led cabinet 36[9] 29[16]
Political aspects 25[6] 49[28]
Cabinet lineup 9[2] 9[5]

Q: Which political party do you support now?

Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) 25 (27)
Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ or Minshuto) 21 (20)
New Komeito (NK) 4 (2)
Japanese Communist Party (JCP) 2 (3)
Social Democratic Party (SDP or Shaminto) 1 (1)
People's New Party (PNP or Kokumin Shinto) 0 (0)
Reform Club (RC or Kaikaku Kurabu) 0 (0)
New Party Nippon (NPN or Shinto Nippon) 0 (0)
Other political parties 0 (0)
None 40 (41)
No answer (N/A) + don't know (D/K) 7 (6)

Q: If you were to vote now in a general election for the House of Representatives, which political party would you vote for in your

proportional representation bloc?

LDP 27 (27)
DPJ 32 (31)
NK 4 (3)
JCP 3 (5)
SDP 2 (2)
PNP 0 (0)
RC 0 (0)
NPN 0 (0)
Other political parties 1 (1)
N/A+D/K 31 (31)

Q: Would you like the current LDP-led coalition government to continue, or would you otherwise like it to be replaced with a DPJ-led coalition government?

LDP-led coalition 29 (29)
DPJ-led coalition 41 (42)

Q: Which one do you think is more appropriate for prime minister: Prime Minister Aso or DPJ President Ichiro Ozawa?

Mr. Aso 37 (30)
Mr. Ozawa 23 (26)

Q: DPJ President Ozawa, after his secretary was indicted over illicit political donations, clarified that he would stay on to head his party for the time being. Do you think he should stay on, or do you think he should resign?

Stay on 28
Resign 61

Q: Prime Minister Aso will present the Diet with a supplementary budget of the largest scale ever to the extent of 15 trillion yen as

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an additional economic stimulus package. As ways and means for this, the government will issue bonds to borrow 10 trillion yen. Do you approve of this economic package?

Yes 25
No 60

Q: The Maritime Self-Defense Force is now on an antipiracy mission in waters off the eastern African coast of Somalia to escort cargo and other ships. Do you support the MSDF deployment there for an antipiracy mission?

Yes 61
No 26

Q: The MSDF is currently not allowed to fire on pirate ships before they fire. The Diet is therefore deliberating on a bill that will allow the MSDF to fire on pirate ships if they refuse orders to stop. Do you support the idea of expanding the scope of weapon use against pirates in this way?

Yes 50
No 36

Polling methodology: The survey was conducted April 18-19 over the telephone on a computer-aided random digit dialing (RDD) basis. Respondents were chosen from among the nation's voting population on a three-stage random-sampling basis. Valid answers were obtained from 2,094 persons (55%).

ZUMWALT